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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 007189

SIPDIS

NSC STAFF FOR POUNDS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [EG](#) [EU](#)

SUBJECT: ENGAGING "LIKE-MINDED" NATIONS ON INTERNATIONAL  
OBSERVATION OF EGYPT'S UPCOMING PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Classified by ECPO Minister Counselor Michael Corbin for  
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: Emboffs have reached out to key members of Cairo's diplomatic community to urge public and private support for international observers in the run up to the parliamentary elections. We have spoken with a visiting UK Cabinet Secretariat team; a joint meeting of poloffs from ten "like-minded" embassies; and a visiting EU delegation that is exploring the feasibility of an international observer mission for the parliamentary elections. Our interlocutors agree that an international observer mission would be a major positive development, and they have watched with interest our efforts to persuade the GOE to invite international observers. End summary.

2. (C) Poloff met UK poloff and UK Cabinet Secretariat officers on September 13 for a review of the September 7 election. Poloff explained that, despite the GOE's refusal to invite an international observer mission, we were pleased that USG-supported domestic monitors had played a key role in the September 7 election observation. Poloff explained the role played by NDI and IRI assessment teams (which in lieu of international observation teams nevertheless advance the goal of international engagement with Egypt's electoral process) and noted our firm intention to try again to convince the GOE to invite international monitors for the parliamentary elections.

3. (C) In a meeting later on September 13 with "like-minded" poloffs from the French, British, Norwegian, Swedish, Belgian, Dutch, Swiss, Italian, Danish, and Australian embassies, poloff reiterated the points already made separately to the British regarding the success of domestic monitoring efforts, the role of the NDI/IRI teams, and the need to take another run at the question of international observation.

4. (C) Finally, in a September 14 meeting with EC Delegation Charge and a visiting six-person team from Brussels--which has spent several days in Cairo exploring the feasibility of mounting an EU observation team for the parliamentary elections--DCM, ECPO Counselor, and poloffs reviewed our efforts on monitoring in connection with the presidential election and noted our plan to push ahead with support for domestic and international monitors. The EU team noted that their purpose in Cairo was threefold:

--"fact-finding" about the just completed presidential and upcoming parliamentary elections;

--exploring the medium to long-term possibilities for electoral assistance, including in such areas as civic education and candidate training; and

--exploring the prospects for an EU observation mission for the parliamentary elections.

5. (C) In the wide-ranging discussion that ensued, the EU team made several key points:

--The EU's internal guidelines for how to conduct international monitoring missions are designed to maximize the access, impartiality and credibility of any EU monitoring mission.

--"Agreement (i.e., from the GOE) is indispensable for us," the EU Charge noted. The EU would not consider an observation/monitoring mission without the support of the host government.

--They believed that while the USG and EU should closely coordinate on our respective approaches to the GOE, they did not favor joint demarches, which they argued are poorly received by the GOE.

--The delegation members noted that European Parliamentarians may also consider coming to assess the parliamentary elections. They noted that ideally the EU MPs would piggyback on a larger technical observation mission, but that even if a technical observation mission did not materialize, some EU MPs might choose to visit Egypt for the parliamentary

elections. The problem with the latter scenario, opined the delegation, was that it combined a partial, non-expert assessment with the relatively high-profile of EU MPs who might issue statements on less than full information.

--Perhaps trying to diminish expectations, the delegation told us that if the 2005 parliamentary elections go off as expected (i.e., with the customary intimidation, rigging, and general messiness), they wonder about the value of trying to mount an observation mission. They argued that unless there is a realistic expectation that the 2005 parliamentary elections will mark an advance in Egypt's nascent democracy (instead of merely business as usual), a formal international observation mission would simply confirm everyone's worst fears. (We countered that the simple occurrence of proper international observation would be a major development, which the EU team acknowledged.)

--Egyptian political party representatives, civil society representatives, and other non-governmental players had all met with and briefed the EU delegation. The GOE had cancelled appointments with key officials at the MFA, Justice, and Interior, however.

--The EU team further noted that eight weeks is the minimum time needed to organize such a mission, but said that a comprehensive effort, albeit under rushed conditions, could still be organized six weeks ahead of the elections.

16. (C) Comment: The EU delegation did not seem optimistic that they would receive an invitation from the GOE to conduct a proper observation mission, but their presence in Cairo suggests that they are willing to give it a try. They also noted that NEA DAS Carpenter will hold a video conference with EU officials in Brussels on Monday, September 18. Septel lays out our current thinking on the tactics we recommend to get international observers for the parliamentary elections. End comment.

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